



**MIKE WALLACE
BROKERED MEETING
BETWEEN FARRAKHAN
AND JEWISH LEADER**

NEW YORK (AP)—Jewish leader Edgar Bronfman and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan met last year in an attempt at "quiet diplomacy" arranged by CBS newsmen Mike Wallace. The Wall Street Journal reported.

The paper said the meeting last May was, by all accounts, cordial. But days later, Farrakhan chided any rapprochement with remarks that Bronfman found objectionable.

Farrakhan has criticized Judaism and accused Jews of being slave traders and demeaning blacks through alleged control of Hollywood.

During a "60 Minutes" broadcast in April, Farrakhan offered again to meet with Jewish leaders, as he has done previously in his Chicago hometown.

Wallace took the initiative, and after being rebuffed by some Jewish leaders, found Bronfman—who heads the Seagram liquor dynasty and the World Jewish Congress—willing to take part.

But two days after the dinner meeting, Bronfman and his wife broke off the dialogue, saying they were offended by something Farrakhan said in a speech. The nature of the objectionable remarks was not clear, but the Bronfmans deemed he was never at ease in brokering the deal and wouldn't do it again, the Journal said.

**JACKSON APPEALS
FOR EQUALITY
BETWEEN RICH AND
POOR SCHOOLS**

CHICAGO (AP)—Americans must stop asking cash-strapped schools to substitute skillful management for adequate funding and start narrowing the financial gap that separates them from rich schools, civil rights leader Jesse Jackson says.

"Houston management style is no substitute for resources," Jackson said during conference that drew educators from across the country began. "You can always find some fragrant flower in the middle of the mess. But by and large, you can't teach Internet where you can't plug in a light bulb."

Jackson set the stage with a bus tour starting at affluent Glenbrook South High School and moving on to a school in south suburban Posen where most pupils are from welfare families.

"The expedition by the educators and school districts in Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, and Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, saw sharp contrasts in the schools and ended up inspecting a computerized classroom at the Cook County Jail."

Jackson, who learned after the tour of his grandmother's death, opened the conference by recalling that she had never attended school in her life but once brought him magazines discarded by the family in whose home she worked.

Among ways to upgrade schools, Jackson recommended a more active interest on the part of parents as well as higher pay for teachers and repair of crumbling buildings.

Schools should teach youngsters not only how to get a salary job but how to invest as well—"alternative economic systems with a major in capitalism," he said. Most of all, more resources are needed for poor schools, Jackson said.

Jackson said he knew that many school officials have heard such calls to action before but said that's no excuse to give up. "Due to cast off the shackles of cynicism and disbelief," he said. He said youngsters must be taught to "challenge the outer limits of the system—not just be the best in it but to challenge the outer limits."

**NIKE HIRES YOUNG TO
REVIEW NEW FACTORY
CODE OF CONDUCT**

BEAVERTON, Ore. (AP)—Nike has hired former U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young and his GoodWorks International group to review a new code of conduct for the shoe and apparel company's overseas factories.

The move is part of Nike's efforts to combat criticism that working conditions at the factories, particularly those in Indonesia and Vietnam, are inhumane. Nike said Young will explore and evaluate the state of Nike's first hand and whether sub-contractors are complying with it.

**Report: American children lagging
despite economic recovery**



WASHINGTON, D.C.—Recent studies of unisured children, dramatic increases in child abuse and neglect, and rising child firearm deaths prompted Children's Defense Fund (CDF) President Martin Wright Edelman today to warn that "if America does not stand up now for its children, it will not stand strong in the new millennium."

"If America's children are to grow up educated and productive, they must have a healthy start in life—with the health coverage they need to grow and thrive, healthy communities that allow them to walk safely to school, and the opportunity to learn unimpaired by untreated vision, hearing, and health problems and by violence, abuse, and neglect," Edelman said.

"It is unconscionable that every day in America, 16 children die from gunfire. 8042 children are reported abused or neglected, and 3,300 children lose private health insurance."

CDF's annual report, The State of America's Children Yearbook 1997, analyzes child and family well-being in a range of areas. The report notes several years of encouraging improvements in key indicators including teen birth rates, youth homicide arrest rates, and immunization rates. In the introduction to the report, See CHILDREN LAGGING/page 3

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Every Day In America

- 3 children die from abuse/neglect
- 6 children commit suicide
- 13 children are homicide victims
- 16 children are killed by firearms
- 87 infants die
- 316 children are arrested for violent crimes
- 403 children are arrested for drug abuse
- 466 children are born to mothers who had late or no prenatal care
- 788 children are born at low birth weight
- 1,420 children are born to teen mothers
- 1,788 babies are born without health insurance
- 2,556 children are born into poverty
- 3,356 children drop out of high school every school day
- 3,533 children are born to unmarried mothers
- 5,702 children are arrested
- 8,523 children are reported abused or neglected
- 100,000 children are homeless
- 10 million have no health insurance
- 14.7 million live in poverty

**New curriculum
greeted with
skepticism/
optimism**

For nearly three decades, education, and its future in New Jersey has been the centerpiece of much debate and legal wranglings. New Jersey has a 120-year-old constitutional guarantee of children receiving a "Thorough and Efficient" education regardless of residency, which has been complicated, some say, because the state has since evolved into 600 independent school districts, each determining its own curriculum. In 1990, the State Supreme Court ordered the state to create equal funding for all school districts, particularly with the 30 special needs districts whose funding has been below that of more affluent ones. By 1994 however, the State Supreme Court had set a deadline by December 31 of last year. Then last May, the State Department of Education released a report on new core curriculum standards which drafters say will ensure the constitutional requirement of "Thorough and Efficient" public schools. Still, it has stirred up a huge controversy about what the Whitman

**Rally encourages community to build beyond
rap violence; fight outside elements**

By Daryle Lamont Jenkins

BROOKLYN—Responding to the deaths of Tupac Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G. (a/k/a Biggie Smalls), Christopher Wallace, the NAACP sponsored a rally against violence, attracting over 200 persons to the Love Fellowship Tabernacle Church, including well-known musical artists, community workers and clergy. Ezekieliah X. Walker, pastor of

Love Fellowship Tabernacle, hosted the event which began with a church service, opening with a song by the Love Fellowship Tabernacle Choir and a scripture reading. Chris Baptiste, vice-president of the Brooklyn Youth Council, NAACP, gave the audience greetings and reminded them that one of the words in the NAACP's name is "advancement."

"Advancement is a very strong word," Baptiste said. "It means 'move forward,' which is what we are doing tonight, taking a great step towards

advancement by coming here tonight, gathering together to stop the violence and start the love movement."

Thereally also featured poetry from a group call the Vibe Rhameleons, a song from the first lady of Love Fellowship Tabernacle, Monique Walker, and remarks from some clergy assembled. Outside was a table of information for those wishing to join the NAACP.

Last week, ABC's *Primetime Live* noted that the FBI were following Biggie Smalls on suspicion of rack-

ceering. Minutes after they turned from him, he was killed, lending to a suspicion of something more than a East West gang rivalry. NAACP Metro Regional Branch Director Hilda Rodriguez, music critic/producer James Miume, and community activist Erica Ford spoke to the issue of an ongoing pattern of circumstances such as this that suggest suppressive elements in society are at the root of the problems of the black community.

See Community fights violence/page 5

"Where it can be a problem I think, is that it sets up comparisons that are sometimes unfair, and I think that is a concern of the special needs districts. If it is a diagnostic to improve curriculum, then I approve."

Administration's true motives are. Critics say that the curriculum is a way to get around the matter of equal funding, and cite Whitman's push for charter schools and school vouchers as examples of how she is trying to undermine the public school system.

According to a report released last May, the new curriculum describes what students should know and be able to do academically. Over the next few years, the content standards will be further defined through the attachment of performance tasks and levels which will be determined as they are integrated into the state assessment program. The new tests for the fourth grade as well as the current Early Warning Tests for the eighth grade and High School Proficiency Tests (HSPT) for the eleventh will be affected by the new standards. In time, the standards will define of New Jersey's high school graduation requirements.

Training on the new fourth grade test for school officials does not begin until mid-to late April, so it is still not completely clear what the test entails. Many school administrators in the area, however, welcome the idea of the early tests. "They changed the tests to be more of a problem solving approach, so that's good," said Dr. Beverly Hall, Newark Superintendent of Schools, a position she currently holds after a state takeover of the Newark public school system, one of the special needs districts, to improve the schools there. "I think we have to assess ourselves and see how we do in comparison to other schools, but for me to predict how the state will work in Newark would be unfair, because we had just gotten here, and we have to train teachers to deliver instruction different before we begin to see gains in learning, and that is what's difficult for the public to understand."

"Teachers have been teaching one way, (and) we have been getting one set of results," she continued. "We have to come up with a way to work, do the professional development with all levels of staff so they change the

**Newark honors Tuskegee Airmen on 50th
anniversary of Armed Forces integration**



The City of Newark paid tribute to the Tuskegee Army on the 50th Anniversary of the integration of the United States Armed Forces. The luncheon and awards program, sponsored and underwritten by City National Bank, was held in the City Hall Atrium.

"It is a privilege to have this opportunity to honor these historic aviators who have done so much for the cause of integration," James said. "Despite the bigotry they encountered, they did not allow themselves to be denied the opportunity to serve our country at a critical time in history. Their contributions broke forever the myths that allowed segregation, inequality and injustice to exist with a thin veil of legitimacy."

The program opened with a color guard salute by members of Newark's Guyton-Calloway Post 152 of the American Legion, followed by the "Star-Spangled Banner," sung by retired pilot Officer Jim Cava of the U.S. Navy, and "Lift Every Voice and Sing," by Cynthia James, manager of the Newark Office of Boards.

Reflections of the Tuskegee Army experience were given by Howard Bragg, one of the original Tuskegee Airmen. Award presentations were then made by Mayor James.

The Tuskegee Airmen were the first African-Americans to train and engage in battle as fighter pilots during World War II. These aviators fought against Hitler's notorious Luftwaffe and inspired the Air Force's revolutionary integration of all its units, which led to integration throughout the Armed Services.

Edward Wright, chief financial officer of City National Bank, said, "I am playing that City National Bank has the opportunity to underwrite this

very important program. The Tuskegee Airmen led the way in desegregating the United States Armed Forces, something we take for granted today."

They returned home with a total of 150 special medals of honor, including Distinguished Flying Crosses, Legions of Merit, and The Red Star of Yugoslavia. The Tuskegee Airmen were training at Tuskegee Army Air Force base in Tuskegee, Alabama and have always been known as the Tuskegee Army.

During World War II, the Tuskegee Airmen accumulated a combat record that included shooting down 111 enemy aircraft, destroying another 150 aircraft on the ground, dis-

abling more than 600 boxcars, locomotives and other freight and passenger cars, and sinking one destroyer and 40 other boats and barges. Throughout that time, the Tuskegee Airmen never lost a bomber to enemy fighters.

In 1941, the United States Air Force had no African-Americans in its ranks. That is when the Tuskegee Airmen unit was formed. By the end of 1949, a total of 7,402 African-Americans were still serving in all-black units. However, 11,456 were serving in mixed-race units and 7,033 were transferred to formerly all-white units. By the end of 1951, the last all-black service unit was dissolved, and the Air Force was officially integrated.

Honorees from the Hannibal Killer Cox Chapter are: John Beamon, Howard Bragg, Mary Copeland, Roscoe Dabney, Thomas Highsmith, David Hinton, Joseph Lee, Tom Mayfield, Nathan Mumford, Edward Reese, James Thornton, George Watson Sr., Honorable Samuel Scott, Dr. Clarence Brown.

Honorees from the Claude B. Gowan Chapter are: Cass B. Freeman Jr., Edward M. Jenkins, Andrew S. Reed, Lucius N. Riley, Thomas Tindall, George Wananam, Marla Andrews accepting for father, Lawrence Everett Dickson, Charles Washington

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THURSDAY, MARCH 27

PLAINFIELD—Members of the Plainfield Senior Service Center are invited to a Birthday Party. For more information, call 908-753-3506.

NEWARK—Training session for volunteers of the Newark Library Campaign at the Newark Public Library. For more information, call 908-753-4301.

MONDAY, MARCH 31

PLAINFIELD—News and support group, "The Round Table" at the Plainfield Senior Service Center. For more information, call 908-753-3506.

ELIZABETH—NAACP sponsoring its annual Black College Tour. For more information, call 908-353-0041.

UPPER MERCLAIR—Registration for "English as a Second Language" program at Montclair State University. For more information, call 201-655-4353.

THURSDAY, APRIL 1

JERSEY CITY—Classes beginning for Tai Chi Chuan, an ancient martial art, at Hudson County Community College. For more information, call 201-714-1735.

BLOOMFIELD—Internationally acclaimed diversity expert Jane Elliott will visit Bloomfield College. For more information, call 201-748-9000, ext. 560.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

WAYNE—Interactive television (ITV) course can be taken at William Paterson College. Hasbrouck Heights High School, Westwood High School, or School #26 in Paterson. For more information, call 201-595-2436.

WAYNE—Adult workshops to ease transition into college begins. At William Paterson College. For more information, call 201-595-2821.

THURSDAY, APRIL 3

JERSEY CITY—Mary Murphy of Project START at the Jersey City Medical Center will speak on date rape at Jersey City State College. For more information, call 201-200-3189.

WAYNE—"Earthworks," an art form developed by American and European artists in the late 1960s, will be the subject of a lecture at William Paterson College. For more information, call 201-595-2854.

MONDAY, APRIL 5

BLOOMFIELD—Bloomfield College's Center for Adult Learning has launched a new course designed for classroom music teachers in elementary, middle and high schools. At the Westminster Arts Center. For more information, call 201-748-9000, ext. 561.

WEST ORANGE—Conference, "STROKE: The Continuum of Care" at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation. For more information, call 201-731-3900, ext. 2372.

THURSDAY, APRIL 10

JERSEY CITY—Course, "The Identification and Reporting of Child Abuse and Maltreatment" at Jersey City State College. For more information, call 201-200-3157.

THURSDAY, APRIL 24

HACKENSACK—The NJ Million Man March Coalition will have a statewide meeting 4 pm at Mt. Olive Baptist Church, 260 Central Ave. For more information call (201) 489-6888.

SATURDAY, MAY 17

WHITE PLAINS, NY—The Volunteer Center announces their 5th Annual Human Race (a 5k walk-a-thon) at White Plains High School. For more information please call (914) 945-4452.

Explorer children's Museum receives \$9,900 from Veterans



Jan C. Scruggs, Esq., founder and president of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), recently presented a \$9,900 check to The Jersey Explorer Children's Museum in East Orange to help fund the cost of bringing the exhibit, "Vietnam Memories—Stories Left on the Wall," to children's museums throughout the United States. The VVMF also provided a wall panel from its touring replica for use in the exhibit which was produced in partnership by The Jersey Explorer Children's Museum, The National Park Service, and New Jersey Youth Corps and AmeriCorps at Jersey City State College. Len Swan, vice president of Chapter 510 of Vietnam Veterans of America, looked on as Mr. Scruggs presented the check.

Freeholders honor YAM



PLAINFIELD—Union County Freeholder Walter McNell, Jr., 4th from right, presents resolutions to some of the members of the Youth Action Movement (YAM) of Plainfield, a group of African American men dedicated to "giving back to the community."

"The Million Man March in Washington, D.C. in 1995 was the inspiration for the formation of this group, established by 12 youth leaders from Plainfield," said Freeholder McNell, also a Plainfield resident. "These young men are committed to our children, by providing mentoring, tutoring, parent conferences, and various sporting activities. Over 3,000 youths have been helped by programs citywide. What a wonderful group of positive role models for our children." Members of YAM are: Martin Cox, Tim Cox, Shawn Cox, Payton Hines, Albert Mills, Greg McCray,

Elliott Simmons, David Wynn, Barry Young, Clement Curry, Samuel Gault, and Jeffrey Hill, Esq. Also, Kevin Puryear, Joe Hawkins, Muqtadir Shabazz, Maurice Bowers, Leslie Chambers, Brian Doyle, Tony Lewis, Herbert Shetell, Connell Spady, Tyrone Willis, John Batman, Randolph Hunter, Richard Perkins, Clinton Jones, and Donald Pretty.

Muhlenberg regional medical center's pediatric unit hosts sea-faring celebration



Several members of the Muhlenberg community participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony. (From left to right) John G. Nolan, Jr., senior vice president of the Muhlenberg Foundation; Lauren Martine, past pediatric patient; Marie Tittmann, Board of Governors; Matthew Hoppe, past pediatric patient; Elizabeth Purter, past pediatric patient; Sherman Martin, past pediatric patient; John R. Kopicki, president and CEO; Jonathan Castillo, past pediatric patient; and Clement Maccia, M.D., chief of Pediatrics.

Muhlenberg's regional Medical Center recently opened its newly renovated Pediatric Unit. A ribbon cutting ceremony preceded a celebration that was attended by special invited guests, physicians, Board of Governors members, employees, volunteers and several pediatric patients. The new 19-bed unit, designed with an aquatic theme, accommodates children up to age 18.

It features an aquarium filled with fresh water fish, as well as variety of blue and aqua tinted paint, borders that have illustrations of fish and marine plants, and other maritime decorations.

"We decided that an aquatic theme would be inviting and soothing to children of all ages and their parents," says Lynn Krugger D'Esmond, R.N., assistant vice president at Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center. "The opening of our new unit now couples the expert care provided by our physicians and nurses with a warm, calming environment conducive to quality pediatric patient care."

In addition, each single room includes a recliner that converts into a bed, so that a parent can stay with a child throughout his or her visit. "Our patients have responded very positively to the single-room concept," says Ms. D'Esmond. "When the parent can spend the night in the same room, it's very comforting for the child."

The play area is located near the nurses station with a large sand castle-like structure with the aquarium built into a window on one side and the location located on the opposite side.

"While the children enjoy the play area, the parents can be comforted knowing that there will always be a skilled caretaker nearby," says Ms. D'Esmond.

Association of Black women lawyers to host Jazz brunch for scholarships

Princeton—The Association of Black Women Lawyers of New Jersey, Inc. (ABWL) will host its annual Scholarship Jazz Brunch and African-American Vendor Exhibition on Saturday April 29 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The event will be held at the Holiday Inn, 4355 Route 1 South and Tidge Road in Princeton. Music will be provided by jazz band D-For. Several African-American vendors

will be selling merchandise including art, books, jewelry and collectibles.

The donation is \$30.00. The proceeds will go to scholarships to benefit deserving African-American female law students in the three New Jersey law schools.

For further information please contact Deirdre Webster, President, Association of Black Women Lawyers, (609) 292-7375.

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100 West Main Street, Livingston, NJ

LONG BRANCH:

100 West Main Street, Long Branch, NJ

MADISON:

100 West Main Street, Madison, NJ

MILLBURN:

100 East Main Street, Millburn, NJ

NAVESINK:

100 West Main Street, Navesink, NJ

PLAINFIELD:

100 West Main Street, Plainfield, NJ

SHORT HILLS:

100 West Main Street, Short Hills, NJ

SPRINGFIELD:

100 West Main Street, Springfield, NJ

SPRING LAKE HEIGHTS:

100 West Main Street, Spring Lake Heights, NJ

TOMS RIVER:

100 West Main Street, Tom's River, NJ

UNION:

100 West Main Street, Union, NJ

WEST ORANGE:

100 West Main Street, West Orange, NJ

New trial attempt for Mumia Abu-Jamal

By Daryle Lamont Jenkins

NEWARK—In the spirit of Women's History Month, the Aljira, a center for contemporary arts, played host to a presentation March 15 by supporters of journalist/author Mumia Abu-Jamal, currently on death row for the 1981 murder of Philadelphia police officer, a crime many believe and mounting evidence may prove he did not commit. About fifty persons attended the event, which also was a celebration of his new book *Death Blossoms*, and was held during the same week when even more information was released that would help his case even more.

"Because there has been some very serious and very urgent things that we think that people need to know about, we saw the need to try and bring some of those things together for those of us doing work in the community," said Zayid Muhammad of Frontline Artists and the event host.

Abu-Jamal, a reporter who wrote often on police brutality and misconduct, particularly in regards to the Philadelphia Police Department, was driving a cab on December 9, 1981 when he saw his brother being accosted by Police Officer Daniel Faulkner. During the ensuing melee, Abu-Jamal was shot and critically wounded, and Faulkner was killed. Abu-Jamal was charged with the murder and eventually convicted. Many people and groups, however, have

questioned his guilt and the circumstances surrounding his conviction. In June of 1995, Gov. Tom Ridge signed his death warrant which was to be carried out on August 17 of that year, prompting a massive campaign against the execution resulting in a stay two days before the sentence was to be carried out.

Abu-Jamal's lawyers have been working to win Mumia a new trial on the grounds that the first one was rigged. Last fall, Veronica Jones, who was a prostitute facing heavy charges at the time of the shooting, testified that in exchange for immunity from prosecution, she was coerced into falsely testifying in the first trial that she saw Abu-Jamal kill Faulkner. After leaving the stand she was arrested in the courtroom for a outstanding bad check charge in New Jersey where she currently lives, and her new testimony was discarded by Judge Albert Sabo, who said it wouldn't make a difference in Abu-Jamal's case. Two weeks ago, Pamela Jenkins, another then-prostitute 16 years old, came forward to say that she was dating former Philadelphia police officer Thomas Ryan who offered her \$150 to make up a story that she was walking the streets at the time and saw Abu-Jamal shoot the officer. Ryan was from the 39th precinct, the centerpoint of a police corruption scandal that has so far led to over 160 sentences being dismissed, and Jenkins, the third person to come forward with a story of police miscon-

duct, was the first to link Abu-Jamal's case to this case. Abu-Jamal's lawyers filed a motion to the State Supreme Court asking that her statements be added to the official case.

The event featured women like Amina Baraka, Denine Collins, and N'Jie Ashe giving strong renditions of poems either penned by themselves or others. Frederica Bey, of the Anti-Lynching Campaign and Women in Support of the Million Man March also spoke to the crowd, saying that the two organizations she is a part of is "1000 percent...on the need to pull

Abu-Jamal out of the belly of the beast." She spoke also about maintaining the progressive spirit long after this fight is done. "The poetry that is here that electrifies and energizes us, our children have to hear that," she said.

Gov. Ridge has recently said that if these attempts to secure a new trial are unsuccessful, he will immediately sign another death warrant to be carried out thirty days later. On Sunday April 27, a national rally is planned in support of Abu-Jamal.

JAMES MEREDITH TO GIVE PAPERS TO OLE MISS

OXFORD, MS. (AP)—James Meredith, the first black to attend the University of Mississippi, will donate his papers to the college March 21 at a ceremony in Oxford.

Meredith and Ole Miss Chancellor Robert Khayat will speak at the ceremony. Meredith's collection will be on display at the Williams Library. "It is a tremendous honor for me to have my papers at Ole Miss," Meredith said. "I'm looking forward to being introduced to the university again."

Meredith's enrollment at Ole Miss in the fall of 1962 ended 114 years of segregation at the school.

His entrance also sparked a night of rioting. Federal marshals and

troops were ordered onto the campus. Meredith, recovering from prostate cancer surgery, graduated in 1963 with a degree in political science.

The collection includes some early drafts of Meredith's 1966 book "Three Years in Mississippi" and correspondence with political and business leaders in the United States and Africa.

Other items in the collection are from Meredith's political campaigns and speeches. Meredith worked from 1989-91 on the staff of U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C. In 1991, Meredith endorsed David Duke, the ex-Ku Klux Klanman, for governor of Louisiana.

Children lagging

continued from page 1

Edelman calls for urgent action at all levels to protect children against eroding health coverage and growing abuse and neglect. She writes that CDF's priority in 1997 will be to raise public awareness about what children need to get a healthy start in life, including health coverage for the nation's 10 million uninsured children in working families, as well as protection of the Medicaid safety net for millions of children and pregnant women.

"Child health coverage is a solvable concern that will make a difference in the lives of millions of children," Edelman said. "It is long past time for America to give every child a healthy start and we urge the President, the Congress, states, and business leaders to give every child health coverage now." The new report reveals that:

Nearly 10 million American children - a record number - lack health insurance. (Nine out of ten uninsured children live in working families). About 1.2 million children will lose private health insurance each year. Unless action is taken now, 12.6 million children will be uninsured by the year 2000.

Child protection agencies confirmed the abuse or neglect of 996,000 children in 1995 (most recent data available) - about 112 children every hour - an almost 25 percent increase since 1990. The number of children in

foster care hit 468,000 in 1994 - a 16 percent increase since 1990. An American child dies from gunfire every 92 minutes. U.S. children under 15 die from gunfire at a rate 12 times higher than the combined rates of 25 other industrialized countries. With one in five children living below the poverty line, children remain the poorest group of citizens in America. Although economic recovery has begun to show inroads against child poverty with the number of poor children falling - from 15.3 million in 1994 to 14.7 million in 1995 - the child poverty rate remains much higher than in other western industrial democracies and almost twice that of adults (21 percent compared with 11 percent). Although teenage childbearing has declined since 1991, a growing portion of births are to unmarried teens. In 1994, only one in four teen mothers was married. However, the birthrate among unmarried Black girls declined in 1994 for the third consecutive year. Only one in four American children graduates from college. U.S. high school graduation rates are no longer improving - one in seven children does not receive a high school diploma or the equivalent by age 24.

CDF's report warned that the nation's ability to build on some of the recent progress or address some

See CHILDREN LAGGING/page 10

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Fleet

EDITORIAL

Make this year the year of the black women

What would we do without Black women, so often ignored, and maligned by song and word. She who has been steadfast in her support of her family. Yet we don't know her. In part, because she has only revealed herself to us through others.

It is time that we renew our commitment to recognize the Black woman for her strength in holding our family, churches, and community together. It's time we recognize her for who she is and what she wants to be. Even when she was ignored, she persisted in giving of herself so that her family could grow.

This month, this year, should be a special case for us to declare the "Year of the Black Woman," our symbol of strength and loyalty. We love you for helping to make our way.

Letters

Dear Editor:

Twenty-four state legislators (12 Republicans and 12 Democrats) are members of law firms or other businesses involved in automobile insurance claims. Skyrocketing auto insurance rates puts more money in their pockets. One of the biggest dippers of them all is the Senate President Donald DiFrancesco.

DiFrancesco said, "The people of New Jersey have elected representatives who, like themselves, work for a living and thus best reflect their interests and needs in Trenton."

In my judgment the 14 lawmakers from our automobile insurance pools are in violation of New Jersey's conflict of interest law, and the Legislative code of Ethics.

I urge Governor Whitman to appoint an independent counsel for possible criminal activities. Any person who wants a complete list of the 24 Bad Guys should send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (business size) to Bad Guys List, c/o Tom Caslander, 123 Lionheart West, Wayne, NJ 07470.

Thomas Caslander

Dear Editor:

Again the Newark Main Postal Facility is being targeted as of April 26 to lose (excessing) 108 postal employees due to 10 level 6 and 8 level 4 jobs loss. Newark is a predominant African-American and Latino American community and it appears that a blatant form of racism is at work. The Newark Facility is slowly being dismantled and gutted and leaving the city further in poverty. The youth of Newark will never have the opportunity to these decent paying jobs. Poverty is man made and this is a clear example of that, and it is being done by the Federal Government (USPS). There is no greater way to fight anti-poverty than with jobs. We the local NAJ/APFW appeal to local, state, and federal elected officials to assist us in this effort to stop the destruction of an institution and a city.

William E. Frazier

White women confess to False claim

ABERDEEN—Finally, the cat is out of the bag. The unlucky "Black Cat" of sex and racism in the U.S. Army, has been let out of the bag.

Last week at the Aberdeen Army Proving Ground, north of Baltimore, five White women—all Army privates—nervously stood holding hands before an arsenal of cameras and microphones. They were introduced by Kweisi Mfume, President of the NAACP. Their story was shocking, and it conjured up memories of the courageous battles fought by Black Press Pioneer, Ida B. Wells.

Wearing their green Army fatigue uniforms (one woman wore civilian clothes) the five White women confessed that they had been coerced into filing false rape charges against Black drill sergeants at Aberdeen by Army investigators, when in fact the sexual relations they had were consensual. Last November in these pages, we reported that the widening scandal involving Army drill sergeants at the Aberdeen base and at Ft. Leonard Wood near St. Louis, MO looked suspicious, because precisely all the accused sergeants were Black men, and practically all of their accusers were White women.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, I.B. Wells was a crusading editor and publisher. She fought against the incessant lynching of Black men throughout the South. A founder of the NAACP, she was especially furious at White women who would

reel prey, when caught in the arms of their Black lovers. Such a charge too often resulted in a death sentence for the Black men. Ms. Wells was rewarded by having her printing press in Memphis, burned to the ground.

Members of the Congressional Black Caucus and the leadership of her national organization have heeded the call of the Rev. Janice Grant, President of the Hartford County Maryland chapter of the NAACP, and principal investigator of the bogus rape charges against several Black drill sergeants. The Rev. Grant promises even more shocking revelations in the near future.

There were many sad ironies in the sex-race scandal at Aberdeen and other recruit training bases in the Army. One irony, more painful than the shame and ruined careers suffered by those Army supervisors who've been accused of rape or sexual harassment, resulted in a loss of life.

That death—the suicide of a Black drill sergeant who was drummed out of the Army after being charged with sexually harassing a White recruit who the five women, who came forward, all knew to be a handsome, physically fit young man—these are revelations of official wronging by Army investigators.

Realizing that their own unjust accusations could be potentially as harmful to the drill sergeants they had accused, these White women decided to tell the truth, shaming themselves, their families, and in the case of one of them, her children, by admitting that they willingly had sex with Black men.

On a broader scale the breakdown inside all service branches that has resulted in widening sexual relations among members of military units must be worrisome to the Pentagon's top brass. Whether it's men or women having sex with persons of the opposite sex to whom they are not married, or men having sex with other men, or women having sex with other women, the concern is the same.

Intimate relations among members of "combat units" are out of place in a command-military structure: they are bad for morale, and they undermine discipline and authority.

So, after the guilty are eventually punished in these cases, the brass must be afraid that this is just not the tip of the iceberg in the ranks of the Army green, but may be symptomatic of a service-wide problem shared by men and women serving together, fighting together—that affects personnel also wearing the Navy white, the Air Force blue, and the Marine Corp Khaki.

Part I

Race entertainment

By Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.

America is in a time of need of entertainment and the media knows how to provide it. You want movie entertainment? Go see "Independence Day." You want sports entertainment? You can have the best (Michael Jordan) and the worst (Dennis Rodman) on the same team. Rodman understands entertainment. You want race entertainment? "Here-e-e-e O.J." is becoming increasingly popular. Name another subject that could give Gerald Rivera the same television viewership or Rush Limbaugh the same radio listenership. O.J. Simpson has given virtual rise to a new entertainment network "R.E.T., "Race Entertainment Television.

Talking about race and racial reconciliation is becoming the "it" thing, even politically acceptable. The nation responded positively to President Clinton's discussion of racial

diversity in his inaugural address on Martin Luther King Jr.'s Holiday and again in his State of the Union address. Speaker Newt Gingrich followed with a call for new ideas to solve the problems of race, drugs and illiteracy.

Nobody in the media wants to talk just about the O.J. Simpson verdict. They want to talk about what the O.J. Simpson verdict is revealing about the current state of race relations in America. The fact that the O.J. Simpson trial is to talk about race in this country is a sign of just how far off the point and out of context the media—and much of our political leadership—is with regard to grappling with the issues of race in America.

The O.J. Simpson verdict themselves are not that complicated. Assuming the results of the judicial system in Los Angeles and the American psyche. The trial followed—and only the appellate process will determine that—we must accept both verdicts if we are to live in a nation of laws and

not of men and women. Personal virtues are just that, personal virtues, to which everyone is entitled. They are irrelevant, however, with regard to being a nation of laws. This principle should not be difficult to accept. All of us want to live in and work toward a society where equal protection under the law is the norm and our judicial system is trusted, obeyed, respected and accepted. This should be all there is to the O.J. Simpson verdicts.

So how do we get from the O.J. Simpson verdicts, to race relations, to race entertainment? By dealing with symbols over substance, and talk over action.

President Clinton stood on the steps of the Capitol looking west to the faded Lincoln Memorial—the spot from which Dr. King gave his famous speech in 1963—when he gave his inaugural speech and paid tribute to his dream. President Clinton spoke to poetic symbolism, but not to economic substance.

Dr. King stood on the steps of the

Lincoln Memorial looking east toward the Capitol and the Congress and spoke to them about our nation's budget priorities, and about economic justice as the path to racial justice in the substance of his speech. He talked about a promissory note—a check that had bounced—had been returned, and marked "insufficient funds." But Dr. King refused to believe that the bank of justice was bankrupt, and said that there would be neither rest nor tranquility until the promissory note was made good.

The White House and both Democrats and Republicans discuss that same promissory note, that same bounced check, and that same bank of justice using other terms. Now the false bankruptcy is call balancing the budget or a Balanced Budget Amendment.

Next week, part 2 of race entertainment, analyzes the balanced budget amendment from different points of view.

Clinton's educational priorities are wrong

Carolyn L. Bennett, Ph.D.

Rooftops leak and the paint peels lead. Ceilings fall down over dark and dirty rooms. The lighting is poor and the plumbing is out of order. Toilets are unclean and bathrooms smelly. Graffiti is on the walls. There is no landscaping. No trees. No play or communal areas. Tall ugly fences circle what seem like prisoner yards. Classrooms cold in winter swelter in summer. Schools falling down in disrepair demand priority. Local school districts and states are falling down on the job. And the President's education budget priorities are wrong.

The Federal education budget must respond to reality, not politics. While courts agree that education is local business, they also say that fixing up school facilities is an educational matter that is constitutional. In a challenge about disparities between rich and poor school districts, the courts told Texas and Ohio that suitable facilities are important for a constitutionally acceptable education system.

The U.S. Congress agreed, in its turn. It enacted a law called the Education Infrastructure Act of 1994. Title one of the bill is titled "Schools." The Education Act. The Act would shore up the school houses, but it languishes for want of funding and the President's attention.

The President prefers tax cuts for higher education—tax cuts to further drive up the costs of already inflated college tuition and to protect major colleges and universities from serious competition in the higher education market place.

Clinton's education priorities are wrong. They are wrong because they ignore fundamentals. Letting some schools fall further into disrepair undermines the struggle to learn in elementary and secondary school and increases the economic and sociological and learning gaps between rich and poor.

Several reports in recent years attest to the fact that the president's education funding priorities are wrong in not responding to the area of greatest need. Sixty percent of the nation's 110,000 public elementary and secondary school facilities need major repair. The Washington-based Education Writers Association.

The worst infrastructural problems are in poor, minority, inner-city and rural schools. The Education Writers Association reports by the EWA and other education data-gathering organizations. Their surveys found that districts least able to pay for repairs were most likely to be in poor areas.

Poor schools needed not only basic repairs but adequate electrical and mechanical wiring to support labs and those computers, satellites and cable

hookups the President keeps talking about. They had problems with hazardous asbestos, poor indoor air quality, poor heating and no air conditioning.

It will take \$112 billion to repair and upgrade U.S. school facilities to good condition, said the General Accounting.

Office, a data gathering agency under the Congress. The President proposes a \$5 billion subsidy for school construction bonds over four years. But this proposal won't shore up repair and maintain the walls and toilets. It won't pay for ongoing record keeping about conditions in schools. And it won't keep schools in good condition. What it does is support a separate but equal doctrine.

In the region where I live, there are beautiful schools standing empty because some parents don't want their children going to them. There are other schools crowded to the gills and in disrepair because the system doesn't want students in these schools who are different and prosperous in every way. And many states don't take up the slack left by local districts.

The average state spent no more than \$104 per pupil on repair and upkeep of facilities in 1994. In the 50

states, the GAO report found expenditures on facilities all over the map: per pupil expenditures ranged from \$6 to more than \$2,000. Ten states kept no record of the status of school facilities. Twenty-three kept no records specifically on school house conditions.

One need only look at the report cards of rich and poor districts to conclude that, among other things, the condition of the school houses matters. It makes a difference to a student's feeling about himself and about his community and school and about his personal sense of community. It matters when all around the poor student are other schools in luxury.

Clean and open spaces also teach lessons about discipline and hygiene and aesthetic appreciation of free space with books and places to learn. They help in the development of an open and inventive mind that stays the course of lifelong learning.

"We cannot expect our children to leave themselves up in schools that are literally falling down," the President said in his State of the Union speech he gave before taking his education budget on the road.

"With the student population at an all-time high and record numbers of school buildings falling into disrepair, this has now become a serious national concern," he said.

Prisoners who do deserve a break

Sharon D. Berry

I would like to respond to the article written by George Willis, "Prisoners who Don't Deserve A Break". This article was full of contradictions, half truths, and the usual "mainstream status quo," conservative, bureaucratic natter that typifies the current political mindset that anyone rather "lock up" people, than attempt any type of culpability for the escalation of the situation, and refuse to take any "proactive positions" to eliminate crime in the country. It makes one wonder whether this attitude would be so wide spread if the jail was housed 80% white males as opposed to 80% Black males in this country.

As the present politicians play on the fears of the public and espouse the philosophy "lock-em up, punish them and then punish them some more, never let 'em go, build more jails, and warehouse more people" as a response to a system that has truly created much of the crime that we have to deal with, this is no public utility. Why? Because the public can't allowed the opportunity to know what is really happening in many of these modern Supermax jails, control units, and prisons in general. The public is told "half truths" and our rights, and are not given the opportunity to form any opinions that are based on truth.

Mr. Willis has the audacity to state that "prisoners, a precondition for rehabilitation is conformity to the regime of incarceration, which Supermaxes teach to the teachable". Let me share with you an excerpt from a prisoner who was caught in these Supermax prisons: And he states, "The effects of this long-term isolation and Sensory Deprivation experience upon many here in the... Correctional adjustment center... deserves a special mention. Few people leave here better off for their experience with Sensory Deprivation. Even fewer leave here the men they were when they first arrived. Many here seem to be thoroughly demoralized,

dehumanized to the extent that what is likely to shock the conscious and insult the sensibilities of the typical, everyday, ordinary citizen, is not offensive, abnormal or unacceptable to some people here. It dehumanizes you to the extent where you are no way different about what you should be sensitive about. It is an extreme refinement in cruelty under the guise of "correction". It is actually an extreme form of social, psychic, and physical torture where everyday common sensibilities are slowly eroded through a desensitizing process.

He further states: "This facility is infested with vermin, particularly mice and cockroaches. We are often served bread that has been partially eaten by mice. Foreign objects such as rocks and hair, rat excrement etc. is often discovered in the food. The surface of the trays often times contain a dark, crumb, fungus like substance as if mold is growing on the surface of the trays indicating that the trays are not being properly cleaned or are beyond repair. Perhaps the clean mind can become so debased, so dehumanized, and sink so low that if one isn't careful, there is a tendency to become conform, and accustom oneself to a standard of living that is lower than that which exists within the animal kingdom. This is the adverse effects of long-term Sensory Deprivation on the human mind and it pushes many say-respecting, rational thinking decent minded men and women to a quest for excitement, acts of desperation, and to the most extreme points of mental and physical degradation."

There are things that this brother has written to me that I dare not write here as it would offend the sensibilities and sensitivities of those who think that they can allow "correctional institutions" the leeway to justify and humiliate punish people. Especially people in the African American and minority community who have thrown up their hands in des-

peration and have trusted the "powers that be" to fairly and humanely punish those people of color who have committed crimes.

These prisoners are really modern day concentration camps! Everyone in them are not killers. Prisoners don't have to be necessarily doing anything severely wrong to get in there, except not being liked by the officers in charge. The greater majority who are locked down this way will be released without any type of psychiatric treatment, transitional house or any de-programming or counseling intervention of any type. A prisoner today is a free man or woman tomorrow. If society should fear anything, it should be afraid of the people that these prisons are creating, after they leave prison.

emotional, mental and cognitive problems that prisoners of war have when they return home from being captured in the enemy camps.

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EGGHUNTS ARE A WELCOME SPRING RITUAL

Egg hunts are part of spring rituals that go back long before the Easter Bunny. Primitive people were surprised and intrigued as they watched an inanimate egg hatch into a living creature, and searched their surroundings for these visible signs that winter's bleakness was giving way to spring's rebirth.

Eggs became symbolic of Easter as ancient spring customs were intertwined with new religious rituals and beliefs. In fact, the word "Easter" is derived from the name of the Teutonic goddess of spring.

Through the centuries, cultures around the world have commemorated the mystery and surprise of the egg as a symbol of spring and new life. Perhaps the most popular of these rituals celebrating the egg is associated with the "Easter Bunny." The Easter Bunny came to America from Germany, where children are told the bunny actually lays beautifully hand-painted eggs for them to find in the grass. In a twist on the tale, French parents tell their children to go to Rome, a city with religious significance, to bring back the eggs scattered on dewy spring lawns.

American families continue the tradition of the Easter Bunny by searching for treat-lined baskets and eggs. The most well-known American Easter egg hunt is the White House Easter Egg Roll, first held in 1887, where thousands of children roll brightly-colored hard-boiled eggs down a grassy slope and hunt for souvenir wooden eggs signed by celebrities who visit the White House.

Today, few people expect to find a real Easter Fabergé egg when they participate in community-sponsored Easter egg hunts or searches through Grandma's landscaping to find what goodies the Easter Bunny has hidden. Most modern egg hunters prefer the eggs to be chocolate and their chicks to be marshmallow.

MADISON AVE BLOCK ASSOCIATION CALLS ON GUARDIAN ANGELS FOR PROTECTION

PLAINFIELD—On Saturday March 29, 1997, 12:00-4 p.m., at Centennial Hall of Muhlenberg Regional Hospital, Madison Avenue Block Association invites all community, Civic and Church organizations to participate in a dialog with the Guardian Angels.

This discussion is open to the general public, however representatives from neighborhood organizations, Plainfield and Union County law enforcement agency representatives will be given priority.

Please contact Tom Turner, President, Madison Avenue Block Association at (908) 757-4971 for reservations and general information.

'DIABETES' MORE THAN WHAT PEOPLE THINK

Reading a book. Walking the dog. Having a healthy heart.

Many of us take these simple things for granted. However, for eight million Americans, the chance that these will be taken away is quite real. That's because half of the 16 million people in the United States with diabetes have it and don't know it. Unfortunately, many won't be aware of their diabetes until the onset of one of its complications such as heart disease, stroke, vision loss, kidney disease and lower limb amputations.

As the number of people over the age of 50 grows, diabetes will accelerate in all populations. This serious disease can develop because of age, being overweight, inactive, or because of a family history of diabetes. Already, half of all diabetes cases are found in people older than 55, and diabetes affects more African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Diabetes is becoming a public health issue that is too serious to ignore.

On Tuesday, March 25, 1997, the American Diabetes Association devoted its volunteer energies on the "American Diabetes Alert," a one-day act to action to identify those who have diabetes and don't yet know it. That's more than 250,000 people right here in New Jersey.

If you are over 45, overweight, and get little or no exercise, you may be at high risk. Call 1-800-DIABETES (342-2383) for a free copy of a poster and pencil risk test. Don't be blind to diabetes. It's too serious to ignore.

Juvenile curfew ordinance approved

By Daryle Lamont Jenkins

PLAINFIELD—After years of discussion, legal fights, and to the approval and rousing applause of residents assembled in the chamber, the City Council unanimously approved final passage of the juvenile curfew ordinance.

By a 7-0 vote, the council approved the ordinance, scheduled to go into effect April 6, following approval by the mayor. Under the ordinance, no one under the age of 18 will be allowed in or upon any public place on the premises of any establishment in the city between the hours of 10:00 PM until 5:30 am. Minors are also barred from these places during the hours when school is in session, unless they are officially excused by school authorities. The law also makes it unlawful for parents, guardians, and establishment to knowingly allow minors to break curfew or be truant from school.

Violators of the ordinance will be subject to fifty hours of community service and/or fines up to \$1,000. If there is a violation of more than three times, minors can be charged as a delinquent under the Code of Juvenile Justice, and the matter may be referred to the state juvenile authorities as a "juvenile family crisis".

The residents that spoke were highly supportive. Key Councilors who in the 1970s gathered 600 signatures in a push for a curfew, only to see it defeated. "I waited twenty-one years for this," said "If we would have had this thirty-one years ago, we wouldn't need more time in jail or courthouses." She blames the then-council for the conditions the city is in, saying that children would have been kept in schools or working, instead of causing mischief. Murray Roberts, another long-time resident, was in agreement, saying it has been "a long time coming." It was former Councilwoman Fehemeh El-Amin, however, who received a standing ovation after her remarks. She, along with First Ward Councilwoman Elizabeth Urquhart championed the ordinance in the early '90s, amid objections from various groups. "We didn't have very much support," she told the council and attendees. "As times (went on), everything changed. I think I will make a difference."

The meeting wasn't without its debates, however. Last Tuesday, there was a special meeting at Plainfield High School concerning the Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority (PMUA) maintaining and operating the city's sewer system. The ordinance authorizing such was tabled at the meeting until the regular session, where by a vote of 6-1, it was approved. Councilman Urquhart voted for the creation of the PMUA, and thinks it is in the best interest of the community. She also stated that it was not going to be an easy transition, but no alternatives have been proposed. The nay vote came from Second Ward Councilman Robert Ferraro, who suggested the system could be put in the hands of private industries and also expressed outrage over the fact that the public wasn't allowed to speak at the regular meeting on the matter. A resident made an attempt to voice his opinion on the matter, as he had expressed his support for the curfew ordinance. Council President Malcolm Dunn cut the resident short, advising him that anyone in the public that wanted to address the issue could do so during the reserved time at the end of the meeting. Dunn earlier reminded Councilman Ferraro that the special meeting at the high school was used to hear the public on the matter.

Another issue addressed was that of the retention basin in Berkeley Heights. In order to contain floods

and avert disastrous situations as there were in past years, the basin were put on high ground there. Berkeley Heights officials have blocked the flood project. Two Union County Freeholders expressed the Berkeley Heights sentiment that the township does not want to, in the words of President Dunn "become a containment basin." Former Councilman Frank M. Meeks III of the Green Brook Flood Control spoke on the matter, supporting an amendment to the resolution that would make it stronger and more specific. "Having been on the commission for twenty-three years," he said, "I'm not going to stand by and let the township of Berkeley Heights block the project. He notes that of the seven acres to be used in the project, only half is in Berkeley Heights. Fourth Ward Councilman James Green and Councilman At-Large Joseph Scott, Sr. have attended meetings on the matter and Council President Dunn reminded those assembled that the "freeholders enjoy their positions because our votes." He supports the project and does not want to run the risk of no flood control. "Bottom line," he said, "if we don't do this, look for the boats on Front Street again."

featuring our young musicians," said Radam Schwartz, music director. "I was so happy to have our sister program Mount Airy Jazz Society here, with my good friend Tony Williams."

"And of course one of my mentors, Duke Anderson gave validation to the whole affair by the fact he has been involved in this music for so long as a performer and educator."



Jazz Institute of New Jersey

pianist Radam Schwartz, vocalist Carrie Jackson and founder Leslie Ford on trumpet played their youthful note.

The Jazz Institute have provided music lessons to youth ages 8 to 18 years since 1989. Some students have moved on to higher education with the assistance of the Institute. The Institute's mission is to preserve jazz as America's contribution to music culture and educational opportunities to students to study the history of jazz from its roots in African culture to the 21st century. The Institute encourages excellence in music education.

Kareem Greene, a student of the Youth Ensemble said, "My feelings toward this program is nothing but positive." I have been in this program

for three years now and I am learning something new every time I go to practice. Today was a celebration of our program. Aside from the necessity of fund raising, we had a great time

"People have written you off," Rodgers said to the young people in the audience. "They say that you are not going to succeed. They say that you will live a life of despair and you're destitute, but in New York State, they're building prisons, not programs for you."

Rodgers continued: "Go out there and get paid. I don't mean by drugs and violence and guns. I mean you get paid by developing yourself with goals, with skills, with aspirations, and when you get it nobody can take it away from you."

Mumme, whose song "Juicyfruit" was sampled by Smalls in the song "Juicy," was a passionate and well-received speaker who pointed out that black music has been under assault for decades. He cites examples such as a whole new generation of young artists coming up without a working knowledge of how to play an instrument, and big name musical groups such as the Commodores, the Supremes, LTD and others falling apart after their lead singers left their respective groups, while Genesis and the Rolling Stones maintained themselves and their frontmen even after they pursued successful solo projects. "I don't want you to watch the

puppets," he said, however. "I want you to watch the puppeteers. They made it, big business for us to talk about our own destruction. We've got to put the pressure of a tournament on those record companies. We are all sad and busted out about the deaths of course, but you know whose going to go to the bank next week, when (Biggy Smalls) 'album drops'?"

Ford, who helped form the Code Foundation with Shapur Shakur to combat the problems in the community posed a challenge to the audience. "It is about time, brothers and sisters, that we begin to commit ourselves to ourselves," she said. She also dismissed the notion of a fifteen-year-old boy on a street corner as the personification of violence. "Violence to me," she said, "is when I go to a hospital and cannot get healthcare...when my mother needs a house, a decent place to live, and she can't get it because she doesn't have enough money but worked all her life...as children starving in East New York...is drugs being filtered into our community?"

This was billed as the kickoff of a series of rallies. Subsequent are scheduled for Los Angeles and Hollywood, Florida.

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New curriculum greeted with skepticism/optimism

continued from page one

way they deliver instruction, then the students I think will improve."

Hillside's superintendent, Hiroko Miyakawa is also optimistic. "In many ways I welcome it. It's so nice to see where we are at the fourth grade. I want to know where my kids are early on so we can identify deficiencies before they go unattended too long."

Still, while the tests are received fairly well, there are concerns that the tests will be used to pit districts against each other, and in the light of the new curriculum standards that are to be based on school funding on performance, the tests could be used to cut districts who desperately need more funding and resources. "My concern is people use any figure for comparative purposes," Miyakawa said. "There is a tendency to believe that the thirty special needs districts do poorer."

Dr. Ronald Larkin, Superintendent of a special needs district, New Brunswick, is in agreement. He says there are pluses and minuses to the new plan, and he wants to give it a chance. "Where it can be a problem I think, is that it sets up comparisons that are sometimes unfair, and I think that is a concern of the special needs districts," he said. "It is a diagnostic to improve curriculum, then I approve."

Tulane Jackson, Director of Testing in Franklin Township, however, says that there is no real need for concern. "We don't use the HSPT's in the wrong way, so I have no reason to believe we will misuse the Grade 4," she said. "There is a possibility that we can identify deficiencies, so I have an open mind."

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NEW BRUNSWICK—Moscow Festival Ball at the State Theatre. For more information, call 908-246-7468.

JERSEY CITY—"Mid-Day Concert" at Jersey City State College. For more information, call 201-200-3151.

THURSDAY, MARCH 27

NEW YORK—Premieres of dance productions "Unsub Change" and "Still Life" by C.O.D.A., NY at Lincoln Center. For more information, call 212-875-5151.

NEW YORK—Exhibit, "Colored Town/Overturn 1947: Max Friedman Images of a Southern Black Community" at the Schomburg Theater. For more information, call 212-491-2259.

NEW YORK—CODA (Coalition of New York Dance Artists) presents a shared program with four dance companies. At the Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center. For more information, call 212-875-5050.

FRIDAY, MARCH 28 & 29

WATCHUNG—"Voices of the Swing Era" at the Watchung Arts Center. For more information, call 908-753-0190.

SATURDAY, MARCH 29

ORANGE—Bookings to meet author Ruby Williams Shivers' new book *Must Reject Tired, Tiresome, and Other Nonsensical Expressions That Keep Us Dumb* at the June Dineen Center. For more information, call (201)673-4448.

Fax Billboard events to 908-753-1036

Book signing part of fundraiser for million man mansion

NEWARK—Ruby Shivers, author of a new book, *We Must Reject Tired, Tiresome, and Other Nonsensical Expressions That Keep Us Dumb*, signed copies of her new book at a fund-raiser for the Million Man Mansion March 15, sponsored by the New Jersey Chapter of Women in Support of the Million Man March (WISMMM). About sixty people attended the event for the mansion which is set to open sometime in June as the new headquarters of the WISMMM.

We Must Reject... takes a serious look at expressions that people use everyday concerning and shows how they are damaging to Black people as a whole. Each expression is placed in different categories, and discussed at length, such as "I support Minister Farrakhan, but I don't agree with everything he says" (categorized as "red tired"), "White policemen need sensitivity training" ("tired, tired, and ridiculous"), and "The color of Jesus does not matter" ("contradictory and hypocritical"). Shivers, who is also host of the cable access program,

Youth in Pursuit of Knowledge, says the book is doing very well, and those who have read it and spoken to her can relate to much of the book. "I was in Queens, and I had five minutes to get up on stage," Shivers recalled. "I was swamped by people who loved the book, and say they can remember the times when they themselves have said some of these expressions. Even though it was a serious issue, it can be funny when you realize that we have all been guilty." Shivers wants to do a sequel and include submissions from readers who fill out a form on the back with their expression.

With Fredrica Bey as chairperson of the state chapter, the WISMMM plans to make the Million Man Mansion into a well-rounded community center. Located at 531 Lincoln Park, it is situated among a number of other community centers and hopes to complement them with a day care center and schools where children will learn about African and African-American history and culture. According to Shivers, visitors that day were "to-



Ruby Shivers signs her books

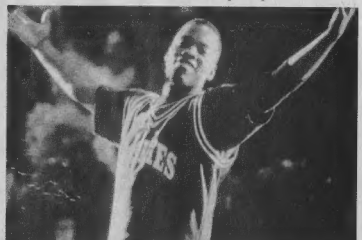
tally overwhelmed" when they attended the fund-raiser and saw the work that has been done so far. She will be involved with the Mansion as well as writing another book, *Damaged Goods*, which will address African-Americans who by their actions have either hurt or rejected African-Americans as a people.

He's about to be the best 6th man anyone has ever seen

In *The Sixth Man*, a movie about "finding self-confidence and becoming a man," Marlon Wayans stars as Kenny, a young man learning to deal with the grief of his brother's death. Just as college basketball star Antoine Tyler (Kadeem Hardison) is about to realize his dream of making it to the NCAA Championships, he dies, leaving his younger brother Kenny to lead the perennially last placed Washington Huskies to victory. Heartbroken, Kenny loses his drive to win until Antoine's ghost appears, determined to take his team from worst to first. Nobody understands the reason behind the miraculous comeback the Huskies make, following the slump that was triggered by Antoine's death.

Kenny is the only person who can see or hear Antoine's wise-cracking, prankster ghost that leads the team dribbling and slam-dunking its way to the championships. Female sports reporter R.C. St. John (Michael Michele) is determined to get to the bottom of the mystery, to figure out this comeback. The outcome of the film is both comedic and heartfelt as Kenny realizes he must ask "the sixth man" to leave the team so he and his teammates can play fair and square. More than anything else, *The Sixth Man* is about relationships and the bond between brothers.

Wayans tripled as co-executive producer, co-writer and co-star. The movie opens April 4.



Kadeem Hardison (center) stars as the wise-cracking, prankster ghost of Antoine Tyler, who comes back after an untimely death to lead his team in Touchstone Pictures' comedy "6th Man."

PETROCELLI REPRESENTS LISA MARIE PRESLEY IN JACKSON CASE

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The lawyer who grilled O.J. Simpson during his civil trial is reportedly representing Lisa Marie Presley in connection with a lawsuit accusing Michael Jackson of child molestation.

The syndicated news show "Inside Edition" reported Daniel Petrocelli accompanied Ms. Presley into a Miami court Friday for a deposition related to the lawsuit and is her lawyer in the matter.

The father of a boy who accused Jackson of molestation said the pop star last May for allegedly violating a promise not to discuss their out-of-court settlement.

A 13-month investigation of Jackson began in August 1993 when then-13-year-old boy claimed the performer had sex with him. It ended after Jackson reached an out-of-court settlement with the boy, reportedly for \$15 million to \$20 million.

Prosecutors in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara counties concluded their inquiries without filing criminal charges.

Also included in the settlement was an agreement to keep quiet, which the boy's father said Jackson violated in a television interview with Diane Sawyer "Prime Time Live" in 1995. On the show, Jackson vehemently denied the molestation allegations.

The lawsuit brought by the boy's father stated that Jackson, Presley, Jackson's companies, ABC-Capital Cities and Sawyer, among others, were all responsible for breaking the confidentiality agreement.

Jackson denied the lawsuit's contentions.

A lawyer for the boy's father said he hopes to prove that Jackson's 1994 wedding to Ms. Presley in the Dominican Republic was a sham, because California law provides that a person cannot be forced to testify against his or her spouse.

If lawyers can prove the marriage was bogus, they may be able to compel Ms. Presley to testify against Jackson, said the lawyer, Peter Goldenshield.

Petrocelli was in his Los Angeles office Friday, an aide said. He held the show on the way in to court: "We're here for a pretrial deposition."

It wasn't clear why the hearing was in Miami.

DEATH ROW PRESIDENT GIVES TV INTERVIEW, SAYS HE DIDN'T KILL SHAKUR

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Calling the late rapper Tupac Shakur his best friend, Death Row Records co-founder Marion "Suge" Knight said it was "crazy" to speculate that he had anything to do with Shakur's death in Las Vegas.

"I loved 'Pac then. I love 'Pac now. He loved me. That's my little homey and it's always going to be that way, you know, and nothing's going to change that," Knight said in his first jailhouse broadcast Saturday night.

Asked about rumors that Shakur was going to leave the rap label, Knight said there was no friction between him and Shakur.

"If you look at any interview that Tupac did, if you look at any video, any TV show he did, one thing he always did was praise Death Row and me and him praised each other," Knight said.

Common sense could tell homicide investigators that he didn't shoot Shakur, Knight said.

"Just shoot me in my head, make sure you hit me in my head for it can look good. That's crazy," he said.

Knight said police have already questioned the man he believes is responsible for the shooting.

Knight also defended his actions just after the shooting. He immediately made a u-turn, away from any hospital.

"How many people you know, would get shot in the head, where it fractures their skull, and instead of just taking off driving and thinking about their buddy to make sure they're alright, do you think any person who get shot in the head is going to say, 'Well, I mean see the quickest way to get to the hospital?' The average person I think would be dead."

Shakur's mother, Afeni Shakur, has suggested Knight and Death Row cheated her son out of earnings from his records.

"When I was in jail, I gave her a check for \$3 million. Plus also you've got the paperwork right there... I think in four or five months Tupac spent \$2.4

Former C.I.A. and KGB agents give startling accounts of their covert operations in 'C.I.A. America's secret warriors'

As the debate grows over the Central Intelligence Agency's post-Cold War mission, Discovery Channel presents CIA: America's SECRET WARRIORS, a penetrating look at this top-secret agency and the eager crusaders who fought its hidden war against Communism for nearly fifty years former officers from the CIA's Directorate of Op-

erations (DO)—the division responsible for clandestine activity—reveal the Agency's inner culture and character and provide a provocative look at this sometimes triumphant, sometimes troubled organization. This

three-part mini-series premieres Monday, March 31 through Wednesday, April 2, and airs from 10-11 PM (ET/PT) and 1-2 AM (ET/PT) each night.

CIA: AMERICA'S SECRET WARRIORS features former CIA and KGB agents—many appearing for the

first time on television—who talk frankly about the hazards, the rewards, the exhilaration and the frustrations of the "Great Game" of covert action and espionage. In-depth interviews include: four former CIA directors—Pauline Helms, the late William C. Bohart, Adam Stansfield Turner and John Deutch, convicted spy for Ames, and former ranking Soviet spy master, Vladimir Kryuchkov, who gave the KGB its fearsome reputation and was Ames' "handler."

Tribute to Black Women by Michele Dalton

A song for our Sisters, Mothers, Wives and Grandmothers

You have been and will always be a Queen
to men like us
the husbands, sons, lovers, brothers, uncles, nephews and friends
men like us
who still hold you as our greatest desire
on this earth
men like us
who are whole and operating in our fullest capacity
only when you are standing by our side
yes it is your love
that keeps us strong
You are the dream
that has been twisted into a nightmare
of abuse and neglect
the cruel winds of abandonment
has shaken your confidence
the chilling rains of lies and deception
by men who look like us
but did not care for you
have left you hiding in that place
deep within yourself
where you are unhappy
but yet safe from further damage
yes they look like us
but are not the same as we are
and we are calling out to you today
our Queens
calling out for you to come home to us
to come in from the cold
to those of us who care so much
we are the ones
who hold you high above
the value of money and other material things
who will put your safety before
prestige and other assorted ego trips
yes come home

come in from the cold
and we'll stand together before
God giving thanks and praises
and then I will offer a special prayer of thanks
for the most precious gift that he
has given to me
that still being you
and your safe return to me
come home
yes come on in from the cold
and let me warm you with true love
let me bath you in compassion
please rest yourself awhile
in the patience I am
willing to extend to you
come in from the cold
and I will cry with you
because without you
I also have felt the pain of loneliness
in silent empathy I will listen
to the struggles you have
faced on your journey
thus far
and when you are finished
I will offer to you
what you should have
been given long ago
my Queen
my beautiful Black Queen
please come home
yes come in from the cold
let me bath you in compassion
say good-bye to what was
and together with me
let's
yes I say
hello to
each other

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HACKENSACK—House Mix & Mingle, 6 p.m. For more information call (201) 342-6118.

EVERY SUNDAY

HACKENSACK—After Church House Get Together 4 p.m. • Donation \$5.00. For more information call (201) 342-6118.

FRIDAY, MARCH 28

NEW YORK—Easter Concert at the Unbroken Chain Church. For more information, call 212-736-3777.

SUNDAY, MARCH 30

Television Program, "Easter Celebration" at 6 am on WNBC (Ch. 4)

SATURDAY, APRIL 5

CARTERET—Luncheon and Fashion by Boucher, sponsored by the Ebenezer A.M. Church, 12 Noon at the Holiday Inn. For more information, call 908-381-5584.

Fax religious events to 908-753-1036

Cross of Life Church going to passion play to support Jesus

PLAINFIELD—Passion Plays are supposed to involve their actors in the emotions of Jesus' arrest, crucifixion and resurrection, but a Union City production has raised more passion than usual with the casting of an African-American man as Jesus.

In a show of support for the producers and actors of "The Passion Play" at Park Performing Arts Center, Union City, a Plainfield church congregation has organized a theater party to this news-making show, which is in its 83rd season.

Cross of Life Lutheran Church, invites the community to join them on Saturday, April 5 on a bus trip to see the play and to support the actor who is cast in the role of Jesus, who will be performing that day.

The Rev. Carol A. Lindsay, Cross of Life Church's pastor, explained, "The power of evil and the sin of racism are very strong in our society. But the power of good and the power of God's people is stronger. We encourage people to join us in showing their support for this production and especially for the African-American actor, Dez Giles."

Tickets for the theater trip, which include bus transportation and the performance, are \$20.00 for adults and \$15.00 for children 12 years old and under.

Reservations may be made by calling the church office at 755-6788 by March 29. Seating is limited, and interested community members are encouraged to respond promptly.

The bus will leave Cross of Life Church promptly at 12:30 p.m. from the rear parking lot. Participants are encouraged to arrive at 12:15 p.m.

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National Institutes of Health
Public Health Service
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Generations Together: The March for Jesus

PATERSON—On May 17, 1997 at 10 a.m. the March for Jesus will be held in Paterson for the fifth year. In a world where racial conflicts, violence, crime and dysfunctional families persist, the March for Jesus will provide an opportunity for reconciliation, healing, unity and positively impact on our great city.

This year's theme is, "Generations Together." With emphasis on prayer for the next generation, a growing momentum of invisible impact that will lead to a great breakthrough in the year 2000, said Veronica Taylor, Coordinator of the March for Jesus for Paterson. At least this will send a generation into the next millennium on the wave of the most powerful united prayer movement in history.

There is an invisible impact as we march for Jesus. This year again, 10 million people will raise the name of Jesus on the streets of the world. Every step is a prayer. That is 20 million feet trampling the kingdom of darkness that is - drugs, violence, racial conflict, and dysfunctional neighborhoods. Over 10 million hours of prayer in a single day, not mention the hours of prayer in preparation.

As a result of the March for Jesus in the cities, we have witnessed fellowships among churches and racial walls crumbled and the wall between the church and the community is beginning to come down.

This year the March will highlight YOUTH of this generation. We are requesting the help of the churches, community-based organizations and parents to register their youth to march in the parade on May 17th. For information and registration of any groups or floats, please call 754-1422.

The March is not a protest! March, not political, nor hidden agenda. JUST FOR JESUS!

POPE DENOUNCES 'DANGEROUS EXPERIMENTS' AND 'LACK OF RESPECT FOR LIFE'

VATICAN CITY (AP)—A few days after the Vatican called for a ban on cloning humans, Pope John Paul II denounced "dangerous experiments" that harm human dignity.

In his usual Sunday address to Roman Catholics gathered in St. Peter's Square, the pope focused on the biblical story of Jesus driving money changers from the Temple of Jerusalem.

The pope did not mention specifically the news last month that researchers in Scotland had cloned a sheep. On Wednesday, however, the Vatican newspaper urged governments to quickly pass laws banning the cloning of humans because people have the right to be born "in a human way."

John Paul also denounced environmental pollution and "the mechanizing of sex" as damaging to human dignity as well as the exploitation of children and the poor.

Youth Talk

The Joy of Easter

By Rev. Martin D. Odum

Easter is certainly a time for celebration and for young people it has always been a special day. Brightly decorated eggs, jelly beans, and new clothes are enough to get most of us excited. As a teenager growing up in Newark, it was a tradition that after church and dinner everyone would put on their new Easter casual clothes and go to the movies. For many young people in our communities, however, Easter is not a time of joyous celebration. Rather it is a joyful reminder of how strained their parents financial situation is at home so there will be no new suits, no pretty dresses, and no new outfits to change into after church. There are many children in our neighborhoods, some may sit next to you in school, one may be your best friend, for whom Easter is a time of pain and feeling left out. So young people, if you are fortunate enough to have parents or family

which can afford to buy you some new Easter clothes, then count yourself blessed. But don't treat other youth who may not be as fortunate as you are as though Easter were not their holiday as well.

If this Easter you are among those youth who were not able to get new clothes, don't let that make you feel like you are less of a person. After all, the true meaning and beauty of Easter is in the newness that comes with the life in the newness that those who accept Christ in their hearts experience in their lives. When we hear our parents quoting the Bible verse "in all thy getting, get understanding," they are very correct. In all of the new clothes and whatever else you get this Easter, don't neglect to get a real understanding why Easter is a time to celebrate. It is appropriate that we would get new clothes at Easter time but we need to work on getting a few other new things. Let each of us work this Easter towards developing a new commitment to our education and to study and work in school as hard as

we possibly can. Then, let's develop a new sense of responsibility to our communities and to each other so that we will work to do all that we can in whatever way, big or small to make where we live a better place. Next, let's use Easter as a time to begin a new attitude which causes us not to think that we are better or less than other young people but to appreciate the value in ourselves and what God has done and is doing in our lives. Finally, for those young people who have been caught up in jelly beans, Easter eggs, and bunnies, all of which are fine, but have not yet made a personal decision to accept Christ, let's use Easter to begin a new relationship, a relationship with the one who made Easter possible. When you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, then whether you have new clothes or old clothes, good friends or bad friends, you will truly know the joy of Easter.

Rev. Martin D. Odum is the Youth Minister at St. Matthew A.M.E. Church in Orange, NJ.

Youth summit focuses on Christian Living

By Candace Waller

The St. John's Baptist Youth Summit gave the 100-plus people in attendance an opportunity to learn more about Christianity while having a good time.

This event held at St. John's Baptist Church in Scotch Plains, on Saturday, March 15, brought people from neighboring communities together. Students from ages 5-18, along with adults were invited to attend.

Groups were given the opportunity to learn some computer skills. Dateline Computer Services, a school located in Plainfield, provided the

instructors and the computers.

Sonya Eastley, Jonette Barker, and Dainalee owner Brenda Cook were on hand to show students the many computer functions. Some of the programs and games individuals had the chance to learn were Microsoft Office '97, MS Word, Excel Powerpoint, and Christian Baseball.

Scotch Plains resident Marian Lewis enjoyed playing the Christian Baseball game. She said that it was something she could really get into.

"This is marvelous," said Lewis, who is a grandmother. "I wish we could have this at the church."

After lunch, everybody went into the fellowship hall to sing. Guest choir, Linden Revival Center of Carteret Children's Choir under direction of Ellen Randsdale, and Nikki Gregory sang a few songs and took part in the earlier workshops. St. John's Young Peoples and Children's Choir were on the program.



Kashari Slaughter in tutorial session at St. James Church.

"I think the workshops were a learning experience for the children," said Gregory, a 15-year-old Carteret High sophomore. "I learned some positive and negative things about myself."

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Black women's group objects to suffrage statue in capitol Rotunda

By Darlene Superville
Associated Press writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — After more than three decades of effort, a marble memorial to three famous women suffragists is moving out of obscurity and into the Capitol Rotunda. But a black women's group does not want it there.

The National Political Congress of Black Women, which supported a four-year campaign to display the sculpture beneath the Capitol dome, now wants it kept out because Sojourner Truth is not among the women

it honors.

The former slave, abolitionist and champion of voting rights for women should be chiseled into an unfinished slab of the 13-ton monument, argues civil rights activist C. Delores Tucker, chairwoman of the black women's group.

"We cannot have this being raised now without the truth about those who have been involved in the struggle," she said.

The statue, a gift to Congress, honors suffragists Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who were white.

But Karen Staser, who led the

campaign to move the statue from a first-floor corridor to the second-floor Rotunda, said Ms. Tucker's request is impossible. She said she could not find any documentation that the ex-slave was ever intended to be a part of the statue.

"This was the original piece that was in the Rotunda and we're trying to restore it" there, said Ms. Staser, president of the National Museum of Women's History in Alexandria, Va. "If there was a new piece of work commissioned, who knows what would include."

She said Ms. Tucker's objections, raised last year after both houses of

Congress had agreed to display the piece in the Rotunda for 12 months, will not jeopardize plans for the \$75,000 move in the spring.

A special committee will decide later on a permanent home.

The statue, formally known as the Portrait Monument and created by Adelaide Johnson, has a history almost as anguished as the movement itself.

The National Woman's Party commissioned the piece in 1920 and presented it to Congress the following year, but lawmakers removed it from the Rotunda to a far-less-visible site soon after. Women's groups have tried for 32 years to get it back to the Rotunda, a popular tourist attraction.

Meantime, the monument is the object of a separate tussle. Sen. John Chafee, R-R.I., objects to plans to boot a statue of Roger Williams — founder of the senator's home state — from the Rotunda to make way for the Italian marble replica of the suffragists.

None of the 11 statues and busts in the Rotunda honors women. But the contributions of Sojourner Truth are not in dispute. She addressed equal-rights conventions and campaigned for Ulysses S. Grant. She tried to vote on two occasions, but was turned away both times.

Historians, however, doubt that a movement led by middle-class white women would have embraced a poor, black woman who could not read or write. But Ms. Tucker said Sojourner Truth's contributions deserve recognition.

"History has been distorted enough," she said. "We don't need it distorted again."

Home owners can fight City Hall if they know how the system works

By Vivian Marino
AP Business Writer

Ask most people to cite their biggest gripe about home ownership and the reply will likely be the same: rising property taxes.

Taxes on residential and commercial real estate have climbed steadily as local governments cope with recurring budget shortfalls. The total property tax bill is expected to reach \$195 billion at the state and local level this year, up from nearly \$190 billion in 1996 and \$168 billion at the start of the decade.

Most of the \$13.500 taxing jurisdictions get about a third of their total revenue from property taxes.

Residents may only limited input into the budget process, but they have the right to appeal. However, they may be able to lower what they pay, mainly by appealing their home's assessed value, the vehicle used by most municipalities to quietly raise taxes and avoid outright hiking rates.

The window of opportunity for appeal is typically in the spring, the time by which property assessment notices are mailed out. Yet experts say few homeowners bother to question their local taxes.

"Most people are very ardent about their federal income taxes; they look for every loophole to get out of paying," said Frank L. Adler, author of the book "How to Reduce Your Property Tax." But when they get their (assessment) notices, they tuck it under the rug. If people really start to look at this, they'll realize they're paying more than their fair share."

The National Taxpayers Union, a taxpayer's advocacy group based in Arlington, Va., estimates that as much as 60 percent of the taxable property in the United States may be overvalued, and therefore overtaxed, but says only about 3 percent of homeowners bother to dispute their assessments.

More than half of those that do, it says, ultimately obtain some relief.

Part of the reluctance to initiate a challenge lies in the appeals process itself, which at best can be described as cumbersome and at worst, intimidating. Individuals are placed further out of touch by the fact that their mortgage companies usually pay the property taxes for them through an accumulating escrow account. Many, therefore, ignore the assessment notice since it's not a bill, along with the fine-print appeals instructions.

"The governments try to make it all mysterious," said Adler, a Miami jeweler by trade who has successfully appealed his own taxes 13 times and saved thousands of dollars. "That kind of puts a shroud around the statement, 'You can fight city hall.'"

But most taxpayers can successfully fight city hall as long as they have a strong case they can back up and understand how the system works.

The most important point to realize is that no one wins an appeal simply by arguing their taxes are too high.

Property tax rates are set by a budgetary process — officials decide how much revenue should be raised and divide that amount by total assessed value in the community. The only way to reduce taxes is to lower your assessment.

All assessments are based on market values determined by the assessor's office. Some local governments use a percentage of the total value, or some other ratio, to calculate the tax bill, which at first glance can sometimes appear deceiving low. To calculate the actual value, divide the assessment amount given in the notice by the residential assessment ratio, a figure that homeowners may need to get from local officials.

"People might say, 'Wow, I'm really getting away with something,' not realizing that it's just an account-

ing device," said Peter Sepp, a spokesperson for the NTU.

If you find your assessment is above prevailing market values in your neighborhood, there are steps to take that could bring it down. First, you must decide whether you want to do it yourself or hire a professional.

"You ought to be able to know whether you can handle it on your own after an afternoon of research," said Sepp.

Tax consultants and specialized attorneys charge either a flat fee or a contingency fee, usually averaging a third of the first year's tax savings. If there are significant tax savings involved, it may be worth the expense.

Scott Renne, the assessor for Minneapolis, where properties are revalued annually, says between 25 percent and 35 percent of those who make appeals to his office receive refunds. His department expects to handle 3,000 challenges in the coming weeks, or 2.5 percent of the 120,000 taxable parcels in the city.

"A lot of these people are frustrated by taxes ... and frankly we don't blame them," Renne said. "Elected officials spend our tax dollars on forming the system, that's where the complaints should be directed. The state Legislature has the ability to shift tax burden from homes to farms, to businesses, or however they choose. The assessor's office has no control over it."

Still, the surest shot at gaining tax relief is to show your local assessor that a simple mistake produced an inflated assessment. You can easily do this on your own by reviewing your property record card in the assessor's office for any errors. Is the lot number and description of property correct? Are four bedrooms listed when there are only three? Make sure easements are noted. A utility's

right to string power lines across your backyard can reduce assessed value as well.

Any exemptions should be noted as well. Some states provide tax relief to residents with special needs, such as low-income families, senior citizens, veterans and their surviving spouses, and the disabled. But they're not automatic; residents must apply for them.

If no mistakes or oversights are discovered, taxpayers still may be able to dispute an assessment on the grounds that comparable properties have been valued differently. There are often various levels of authority to take an appeal.

But homeowners must be prepared to prove their cases, with professional appraisal's or recent sales prices of similar properties, both of which indicate declining property values. Find homes comparable in location, lot size and square footage, architectural style and age, and research their assessments.

In some states, a qualified appraiser must be brought in to testify at an appeals hearing, which can be costly. In others, an appeal will even be heard unless an overassessment exceeds a certain percentage, usually 10 percent to 15 percent.

"Assessment is an art, not a science," said Mark Olander, a property tax law specialist in Chicago. "You can have different experts disagree. Ten- to 15 percent isn't something you can hold the assessor's feet to the fire."

He advises clients to weigh the expenses involved in an appeal to any potential savings. "It may not justify it, and there are some jurisdictions where assessments can be raised as well as lowered."

City National bank receives enterprise awards

NEW JERSEY — Treasury Secretary Robert E. Rubin today announced that Bank Enterprise Awards for having increased their support for community development. The Bank Enterprise



Louis Prezauro Sr., Pres/CEO
City National Bank

Awards (BEA) Program leveraged nearly \$66 million in private sector equity investment and other financial support from these banks and thrifts to Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs). In addition, the program catalyzed \$60 million in total direct lending to small businesses by these banks and thrifts within the distressed neighborhoods they serve.

Institutions receiving awards are located in 18 states and the District of Columbia. The BEA Program is designed to foster partnerships between banks and thrifts and CDFIs and is another way the Clinton Administration helps to ensure that residents of

economically distressed neighborhoods have access to financial capital.

"Bank Enterprise Awards create a unique opportunity to forge partnerships between conventional lenders and community development financial institutions," Secretary Rubin said. "These partnerships will increase the flow of credit to create jobs and growth in low-income communities."

City National Bank of New Jersey will receive a \$162,065 BEA grant for increasing its lending to distressed neighborhoods by nearly \$1.7 million. In the first six months of 1996, the Bank made loans totaling \$3,250,000 to consumers and for commercial real estate, single family housing, multi-family housing, and small businesses. City National Bank of New Jersey is a minority-owned national bank with assets totaling \$126 million.

Today's announcement pertains to the first round of awards under the BEA Program. The program is intended to encourage insured depository institutions to make investments in CDFIs and increase loans and services within distressed communities. The BEA Program complements another program also administered by the CDFI Fund, the CDFI Program, which announced its first awards on July 31 st. The CDFI Fund was created as part of President Clinton's initiative to support the creation of a national network of financial institutions dedicated to community development.

Children lagging

Continued from page 3

of the most urgent problems facing children is threatened on many fronts by the 1996 welfare law. Every family using food stamps to help feed its children will see benefits reduced or terminated. Child and family homelessness is likely to increase as benefit cutoffs exacerbate the federal government's retreat from housing assistance. And greater economic stress among families may lead to an even greater increase in the number of cases of child abuse and neglect.

However, Edelman pointed to a number of hopeful signs of community mobilization to help children most in need. "Parents, communities, youth-serving groups, young people, religious congregations and businesses are teaching us that we can make our children a top priority and

that our children's problems are not intractable," Edelman said. "With the help of private foundations, much maligned but imaginative and dedicated public officials, well-targeted federal, state, and local initiatives in communities are making a real difference in children's lives. We urge people not to get discouraged by alarming statistics or unfair laws but

to keep standing strong and together for children." Edelman said. "On June 1, 1997, we will again celebrate Stand For Children day, not with a single Washington rally, but with hundreds of events in local communities and a 'Virtual' Stand For Children on the Internet to ensure that no child is left behind."

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